

REMARKS

Claims 1, and 4-21 remain in this application for consideration. Claims 12-17 were allowed in the last Office Action. Claims 3-8, 11 and 18-21 were all indicated as containing allowable subject matter but were objected to either under §112 of the statute or because they depended from a rejected claim.

By the present amendment, the objections to the objected to claims have been addressed and those claims which were rejected on the prior art have been canceled.

Specifically, referring initially to claim 1, this claim now includes the limitations of canceled claims 2 and 3. Accordingly, amended claim 1 corresponds to original claim 3 which the Examiner indicated in paragraph 9 of the Office Action would be allowable subject to being rewritten in independent form.

The dependency of claims 4 and 5 has been amended from canceled claim 3 to amended claim 1.

The dependency of claims 9 and 10 has been amended from canceled claim 2 to amended claim 1.

In paragraph 3 of the Office Action it was noted that in claim 18 there was no antecedent basis for "said mounting portion". This has been addressed by changing the dependency of claim 16, from which claim 18 depends, to claim 15 rather than claim 14. Claim 15 specifies the "mounting portion" and thus provides proper antecedent for this term as it is used in claim 18.

Claim 19 has been amended to remove the reference to "end segments" which the Examiner properly pointed out lacked antecedent basis and instead the word "ends" has been substituted. Antecedent basis for "ends" is found in the first step of the method which positively sets forth an "expansion ring having first and second ends". The only basis for objecting to

claims 20 and 21 was their dependency from claim 19. The amendment to claim 19 has thus also cured the basis for the §112 rejection of these latter two claims.

All of the claims having been amended to address the issues raised by the Examiner it is believed that these claims are now in full condition for allowance. The Examiner's assistance in bringing the formal objections to the attention of the applicant so as to place the case in the best possible form is noted with appreciation. A notice of allowance is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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